CHRISTCHURCH *to* LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL

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INTRODUCTION

ON TRACK ON THE CHRISTCHURCH TO LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL

We welcome you to embark on an historic adventure along the Christchurch Little River Rail Trail.

The Rail Trail is a great way to actively explore Christchurch and the beautiful countryside that surrounds it.

The ride begins in the heart of Christchurch so make sure to take time to explore the centre of Christchurch which is bustling with attractions and activities for all. See the Christchurch section of this brochure for an introduction to some of the great things on offer in Christchurch!

After leaving the city, the route winds its way out into the country along the historic Little River Branch railway line and takes you through interesting towns and villages that are well off the beaten tourist track. Along the way, there are interpretation panels and preserved railway stations to show trail users some of the region's history.

You will be treated to exceptional scenery and wildlife as you walk or bike the track. Although the trail itself is almost entirely flat, you will be surrounded on both sides by hills and mountains that offer inspiring views and tell the story of the Banks Peninsula's volcanic past. The trail passes by **Te Waihora** *(Lake Ellesmere)*, which is recognised as home to New Zealand's most diverse bird population and consequently some of the best bird-watching.

The 50km-long Rail Trail route can be ridden in its entirety or done in short sections *(see maps for parking along the route)*.

For those who want to turn the trip into a multi-day adventure, there are many options for accommodation along the Trail whether you're staying in a tent or prefer something more substantial. There are shuttles available if you prefer to ride the trail in only one direction.

The Trail takes you from city streets on dedicated urban cycleways through to quiet country roads and over graded off road tracks that are ideal for families and enjoyable to walk or bike for people of all abilities.

CHRISTCHURCH - LITTLE RIVER RAILTRAIL

Hike it...
Bike it...
Like it!

Please visit our website or Facebook for more information:

www.facebook.com/littlerivertrail.kiwi.nz
www.littlerivertrail.kiwi.nz

ENJOYING THE RAIL TRAIL

BE PREPARED

New Zealand law requires everyone cycling on a public road to wear a cycling helmet. Before you leave, make sure that your bike is in good rideable condition and ensure you have a backup plan for mechanical problems as the trail is not near a bike service centre. When travelling in a group, check that someone can deal with basic mechanical problems such as a flat tyre or rubbing brakes.

ON-ROAD CYCLING

While most of the Rail Trail is off-road, some portions are on city streets and quiet rural roads. New Zealand road rules apply any time you ride on roads shared with automobiles. Use hand signals to communicate with motorists well in advance of turning and stopping. Riding two abreast is legal when conditions allow but holding up traffic is not, so please be considerate of other road users.

RESPECT WEATHER CONDITIONS

The trail can be subject to strong breezes whistling down the valleys on much of the trail so it is advisable to carry rain, wind and cold weather gear with you between the months of April and September. Layers of clothing that can easily be removed and carried with you are the most practical. However, the summer brings a whole new set of conditions including hot weather so sunblock and bug spray is strongly suggested and you might consider wearing a soft and flexible sun hat under your helmet. The infamous nor'west wind is hot and dry so carry plenty to drink with you. Nor'westers most often occur between October and February.

FOOD, DRINKS AND FACILITIES

There are no towns or villages between Lincoln and Little River but a 1.5km detour along a state highway towards Motukarara is your best option for refuelling. It is advisable to equip yourself with a snack and water bottle regardless of your biking skill level. There are toilet facilities at Lincoln and Motukarara but nothing between the two. This 15km stretch could take up to one and a half hours to complete so plan toilet stops accordingly and bring plenty of water with you.

(**Note:** There is no drinkable water available between Lincoln and Little River (*a 35km stretch each way*)

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Emergency Services: 111

Lincoln Police: 03 378 0160

Lincoln Fire Department: 03 325 2801

ANSWERS TO COMMON QUESTIONS

IS THE TRAIL COMPLETE?
Open and fully operational, the Little River Rail Trail has some proposed connections soon to be built that will make the ride even more enjoyable. In the meantime, the route is well signposted so there is no danger of riders getting lost or off track.

DO I NEED A MOUNTAIN BIKE?
While the ride can be comfortably completed on a hybrid or city bike, the off-road sections will be difficult on a road bike fitted with narrow tyres (less than 1.25in or 3.20cm) as they are more likely to puncture especially on some of the bridge approaches. We recommend choosing a bike with wider tyres to make your ride on the trail more comfortable.

HOW LONG WILL THE RIDE TAKE?
If you choose to ride to Little River just one way at an easy pace, you can expect it to take anywhere between five to seven hours. From Little River, a shuttle can be arranged to take you back to Christchurch. Alternatively, if you like the idea of extending the ride over two days, there are several places to stay en route – camping grounds, B&B accommodation or a hotel (*see pages 14, 18, 26 and 38 for more information*).

IS THE TRAIL SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN?
Given that most of the trail is off road, it is a great ride for children of all ages. In the case of very young children, you might consider only riding one or two sections in a day or starting from a midway point i.e. parking or catching the bus to Birchs Road in Prebbleton and pedalling from there. A fun activity sheet that challenges kids to locate native birds and railroad features along the way is available on our website.

WHAT IS THE BEST TIME OF YEAR TO RIDE?
The trail is open and enjoyable year-round. Weather wise, spring and summer are the warmest times to ride the trail. Springtime has its own special attractions, including the sight of newly born lambs along the route. Riders should be aware that during the warmer times of the year many small flying insects are prevalent near the lakes, which can be a bit of a nuisance.

WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED?
There is no cost to ride the trail, but if you wish to arrange a shuttle to take you one or both ways this can be arranged with InterCity (+64 03 365 1113) or Akaroa Shuttle (+64 0800 500 929).

HOW FIT DO I NEED TO BE?
Anyone who is moderately fit will enjoy this beautiful ride as it is flat and the pace is self-selected. The ride is also appealing to those with a high level of fitness whether they choose to make it a one way or return ride.

ARE THERE TOILETS LOCATED ALONG THE TRAIL?
All the public toilets along the way are marked on the map. Restaurants and some other businesses located en route will also have toilet facilities.

WHAT ABOUT HORSES AND DOGS?
As much of the trail passes through farmland and important wildlife areas, horses are strictly forbidden on any section of the trail. Dogs are not permitted on the Motukarara to Little River section. On other parts of the trail, dogs are permitted but must remain on a lead.

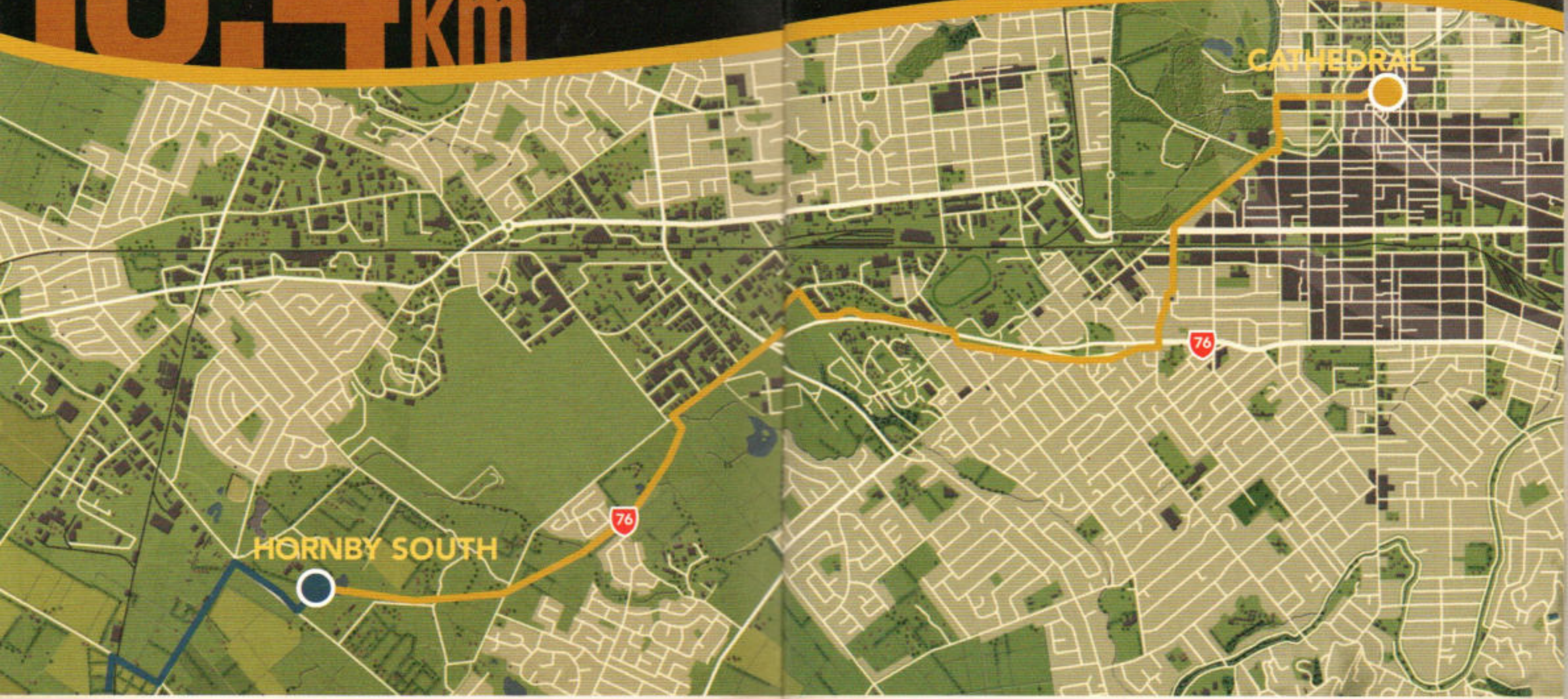
CAN I SWIM IN THE LAKES?
Swimming in any of the lakes or rivers on or near the trail is not permitted due to several preserved natural habitats and potentially dangerous bodies of waters according to the Department of Conservation (DOC). Te Waihora/ Lake Ellesmere experiences toxic algal blooms which are hazardous to human and animal health (especially dogs).

CAN I CAMP ALONG THE TRAIL?
Freedom camping is not permitted anywhere on or adjacent to the trail or in nearby carparks. There are camp grounds along the way shown on pages 28, 32, and 40.

CATHEDRAL
HORNBY
HORNBY SOUTH
Shands Road
Springs Rd
PREBBLETON
Birchs Rd
Leadleys Rd
Robinsons Rd
Tancreds Rd
LINCOLN
Ellesmere Rd
Lincoln Tai Tapu Rd
TAI TAPU
River Rd
Gebbies Rd
NEILLS RD
Hodges Rd
Gebbies Pass Rd
MOTUKARARA
ATAAHUA
KAITUNA
PRICES VALLEY
LITTLE RIVER
Christchurch Akaroa Rd
Lake Forsyth
Jones Rd
Bayleys Rd
BIRDLINGS FLAT
CHRISTCHURCH TO
LITTLE RIVER RAIL TRAIL

15.4km Christchurch Cathedral Square to Marshs Road

- **TRAIL SURFACE:** ASPHALT
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** LOW
- **TECHNICAL SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAIL TYPE:** MOSTLY OFF-ROAD TRAIL, SOME SIDE-ROAD CROSSINGS, SOME ON CITY MAJOR CYCLEWAYS AND 1.6KM ON RURAL ROADS
- **INCLINE:** FLAT
- **GRADE:** 1



The Rail Trail begins at Cathedral Square located in the heart of Christchurch passing by the Arts Centre, Canterbury Museum, Antigua Boat Sheds and hospital and then through Hagley Park. Enjoy a few minutes riding in the park before arriving at a well-controlled intersection where you will cross Moorehouse Ave onto Grove Rd. After this, the trail leads through quiet suburban streets to another controlled crossing of Brougham St and turns west onto an approximately 100m long painted cycle path which leads to a separated cycle path. This path provides a safe cycling environment next to the motorway underpass at the end of the motorway. From there you will join a separated cycle path to Springs Road after which there is 1km of on-road cycling to Marshs Road, then a further 800m on Marshs Road until you join the smooth and separated bike path from Marshs Road to Prebbleton.

We recommend this alternative start be used by town-based cyclists who are confident negotiating through roundabouts.

CHRISTCHURCH

We recommend this route be used by town- based cyclists. Otherwise, we recommend starting at Hornby, Shands Road– see page 14.

The construction of Stage 2 of the Christchurch Southern Motorway is disrupting both this suggested route and the alternative start. The disruption is from the point marked Hornby South above and extends to half way along the longest straight in the blue shaded route. This is about 1 kilometre of biking. The contractors have made the route as safe as possible but it does include an unsignalled crossing of the major traffic diversion that feeds the completed section of the motorway. Please exercise extreme caution in this area.

(see: http://cyclingchristchurch.co.nz/bike-hire/)

CHRISTCHURCH CATHEDRAL SQUARE TO MARSHS ROAD

POTENTIAL HAZARDS

On intercity off-road cycle paths, make sure to ride on the left hand side of the path and be careful when passing pedestrians.

Obey all traffic laws and look out for bike specific traffic signals.

CHRISTCHURCH CITY HIGHLIGHTS

- Botanic Gardens
- Christchurch Art Gallery
- Cathedral Square
- Arts Centre
- Canterbury Museum
- Hagley Park
- The Centre of Contemporary Art (CoCA)
- New Brighton
- Mona Vale Park
- New Regent Street
- Christchurch Adventure Park (Bike Park)
- Port Hills

MARGARET MAHY PLAYGROUND

BRIDGE OF REMEMBRANCE

CHRISTCHURCH CATHEDRAL SQUARE TO MARSHS ROAD

www.littlerivertrail.kiwi.co.nz

4km Shands Road (Hornby) to Prebbleton

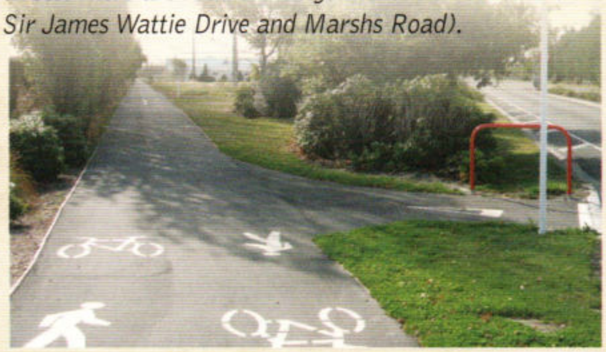
- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 0.6KM ON SEALED ROAD, 3.3KM ON SEALED TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** EASY
- **TECHNICAL SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** 50KPH BESIDE ON-ROAD CYCLEWAY
- **GRADE:** 1

This section begins at a small carpark on Shands Road 400m south of the Shands Road–Halswell Junction Road intersection in the Christchurch suburb of Hornby. Connecting Hornby to the nearby residential village of Prebbleton in the Selwyn District, the asphalted off-road trail runs alongside Shands Road, turns into Marshs Road and then goes along the old railway corridor into Prebbleton.

Whether you are at the beginning of your bike adventure or coming up to the end of it, there are several reasons to have a break in Prebbleton, not least of which are the refreshment options – ice cream, takeaway treats, coffee or even a sit-down full meal. Once you have refuelled, head towards the roundabout and watch for the churchyard on your right, which boasts the largest macrocarpa tree in the South Island. Historic buildings in the village include the Prebbleton Community Cottage (1890) and the All Saints Anglican Church (1907) which happens to be the third church built on this site. The original church was deemed too small and sold accordingly while its replacement burned down in 1906. The current church is currently the only church in New Zealand with a full clarion of five bells.

The off road cycle path has been effected by the construction of Stage 2 of the Christchurch Southern Motorway. The contractors have endeavoured to make the cycle path as safe as possible. While this section can still be biked, please exercise extra care until construction is completed sometime in 2020.

(Note: There are road crossings without crosswalks on Sir James Wattie Drive and Marshs Road).



HIGHLIGHTS

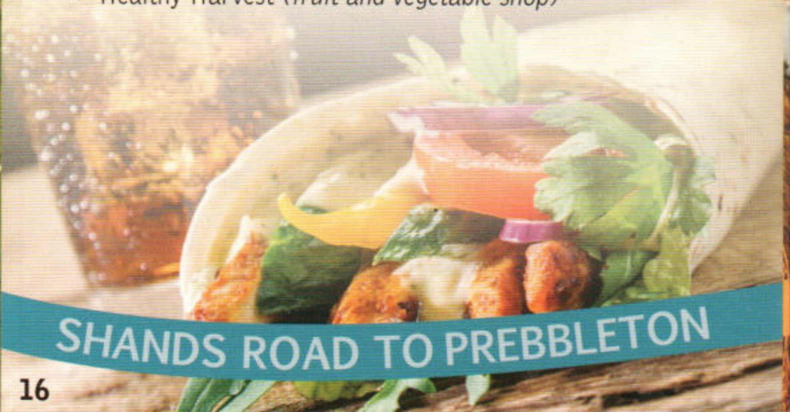
- Railway corridor – tracks and bridge
- The largest macrocarpa in the South Island
- Playgrounds, toilets and picnic areas – Prebbleton Domain *(side trip)*
- Prebbleton Cottage and All Saints Church
- Prebbleton Nature Reserve

ACCOMMODATION IN OR NEAR PREBBLETON

- Matariki B&B (*corner Tosswill and Ellesmere Roads, Prebbleton*)
- Menteith House (*15 Elmwood Drive, Prebbleton*)
- Huntington Grange B&B (*804 Shands Road, Prebbleton*)

FOOD AND DINING IN PREBBLETON

- Milanese Italian Restaurant
- The Bridge Restaurant
- Veenuz Indian D'zire *(takeaways)*
- Prebbleton Takeaways *(fish and chips)*
- Thyme Café
- Prebbleton Café
- Prebbleton Tavern
- Healthy Harvest *(fruit and vegetable shop)*



SHANDS ROAD TO PREBBLETON

SHANDS ROAD TO PREBBLETON

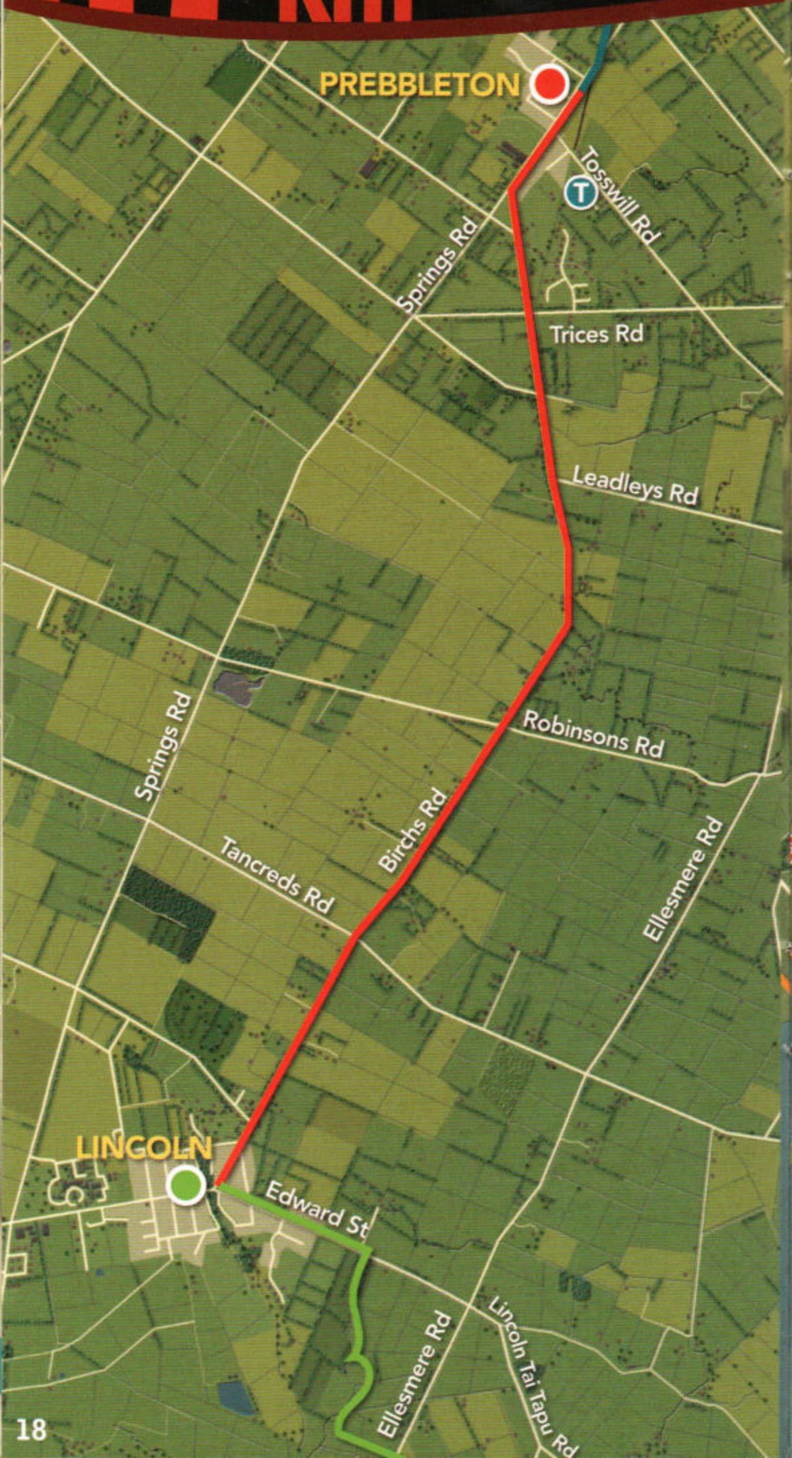
BE ADVISED:

There are road crossings without crosswalks on Sir James Wattie Drive and Marshs Road. Proceed with caution at these unmarked crossing.

www.littlerivertrail.kiwi.nz

7.7km Prebbleton to Lincoln

- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 7.7KM ON SEALED TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** EASY
- **SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** 7.7KM ON SEALED TRACK
- **GRADE:** 1



This section joins the village of Prebbleton to Lincoln Township. It is mostly on a 7km off-road sealed route alongside Birchs Road, adjacent to the original railway line, through pleasant rural surroundings and is wide enough for bi-directional cycling.

You will then ride on the road through the Prebbleton Village for 0.95km and then turn left into Birchs Road. Take Birchs Road for 0.8km until you re-join the sealed off-road cycle trail on the left at the intersection with Trices Road.

Stay on this smooth and beautiful separated cycleway for 6km until you reach Lincoln. On this section, you will enjoy views of several different farms with a variety of livestock. After 4.3km you might spot the Ladbrooks Railway Station, old fence posts and large wooden gate and hawthorn hedges (5km) which mark where the branch line ran from 1875 until 1967.

Make sure to check out all that Lincoln Township has to offer by continuing down James Street at the fork and making a right onto Gerald Street which will guide you past several cafes, bars and shops.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Old Lincoln Butcher's Shop built in 1875 renamed Liffey Cottage
- Presbyterian Church built in 1881 now named Union Church
- Liffey Gallery *(1 James Street, Lincoln)*
- Playgrounds and picnic areas – Lincoln Event Centre *(Meijer Drive)*

ACCOMMODATION IN OR NEAR LINCOLN

- Orpingham House B&B *(3 Marion Place, Lincoln).*
- Lincoln Motel *(6 Maurice Street, Lincoln)*
- The Famous Grouse Hotel *(Gerald Street, Lincoln)*

FOOD AND DINING IN LINCOLN

- Coffee Culture
- The Laboratory
- Famous Grouse
- The Tea House
- Bakery
- Dairy

PREBBLETON TO LINCOLN

FACILITIES

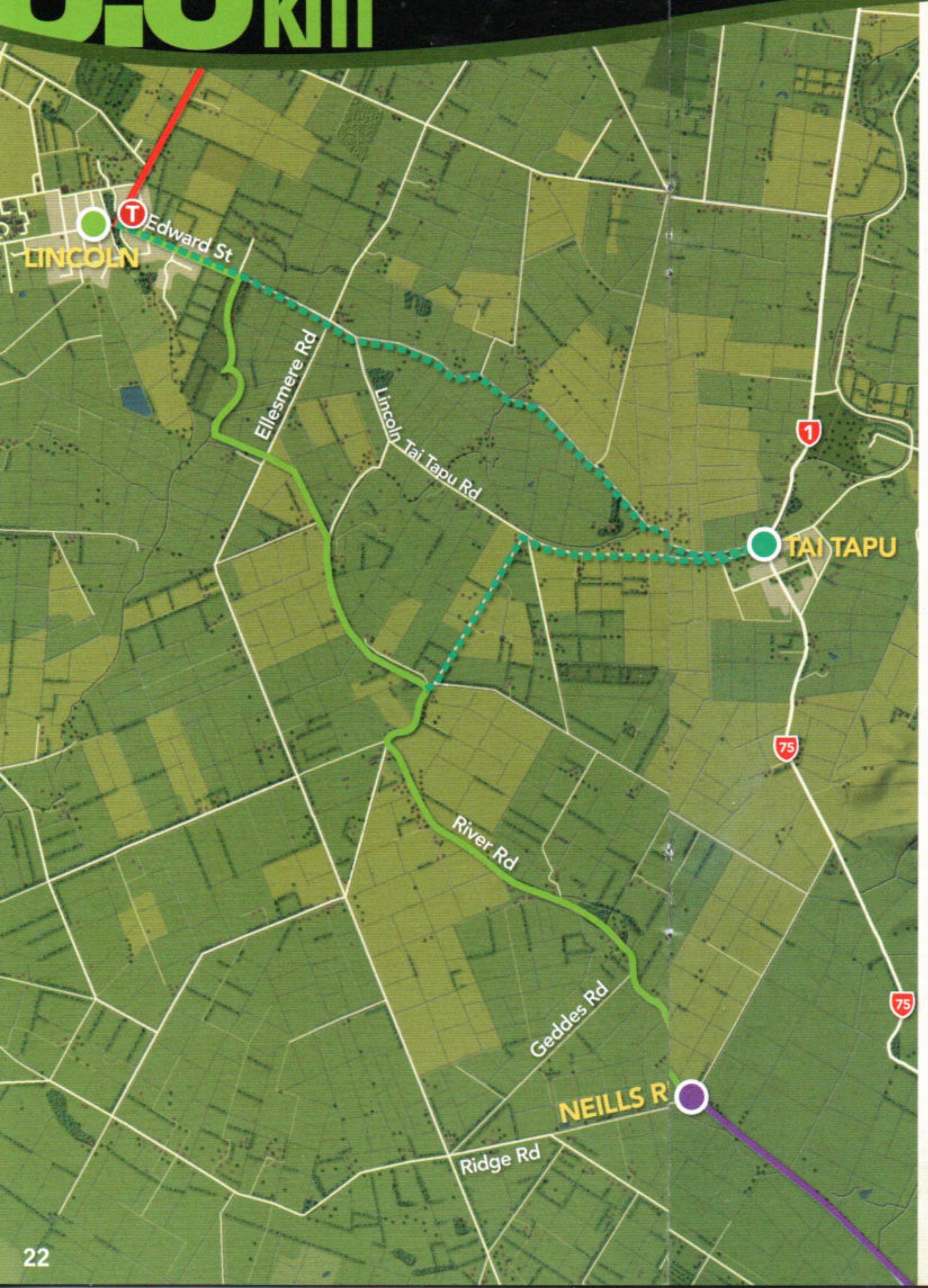
- Parking at Prebbleton along Birchs Road
- Kildare Terrace 24/7 toilets
- Lincoln Event Centre *(Meijer Drive, Lincoln)* toilets, drinking water, parking
- Medical Centre
- Two Pharmacies

PREBBLETON TO LINCOLN

www.littlerivertrail.kiwi.nz

9.3km Lincoln to Neills Road

- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 5.8KM ON SEALED ROAD, 1.6KM ON SEALED TRACK, 1.9KM ON SHINGLE TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** LOW
- **SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** SHORT DISTANCES ON ROADS WITH 100/50 KPH SPEED LIMITS AND ON AN OFF-ROAD CYCLEWAY
- **GRADE:** 1



The trail leaves Lincoln along Edward Street which changes names to Lincoln Tai Tapu Road as it is the main route towards the village of Tai Tapu. The trail shares the footpath along Edward Street to Liffey Springs (***Note:** If you have time to explore villages off the Rail Trail, continue straight for 4km to the village of Tai Tapu, where you will find shops, accommodation and other amenities).*

Enter the Liffey Springs area and stay on the cycle/footpath as it follows the river after the spring. Cross the river on either the cycle bridge or the concrete bridge and enter the wetlands developed by Selwyn District Council. Continue following the river downstream and enter the cycle path between the river and a field. This track goes to Moirs Lane, an undeveloped public road. Follow Moirs Lane away from the river until its end at Ellesmere Road. Almost directly opposite is the entry to a dedicated cycle path that goes off through the field. At the end of the dedicated cycle path through the fields, go straight onto Collins Road East. Follow that road for about 200 metres and turn right into River Road which follows the Halswell River. While there is a low volume of traffic on River Road, it is narrow so single file riding is recommended.

Follow River Road until it becomes Geddes Road – there are Rail Trail signs that guide you to an off-road cycle path which follows the river downstream.

LINCOLN TO NEILLS ROAD

HIGHLIGHTS

- Liffey Springs
- Halswell River

ACCOMMODATION in or near Tai Tapu

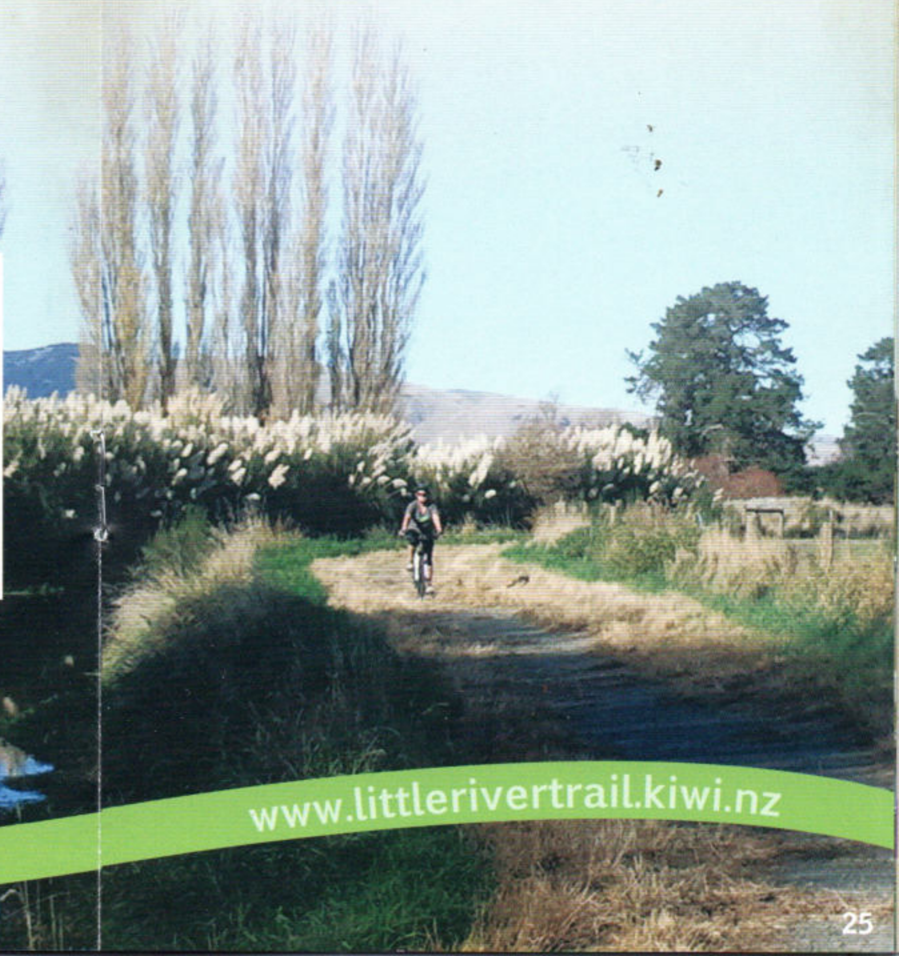
- Tai Tapu Lodge *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- Otahuna Lodge *(Rhodes Rd)*

FOOD AND DINING in Tai Tapu

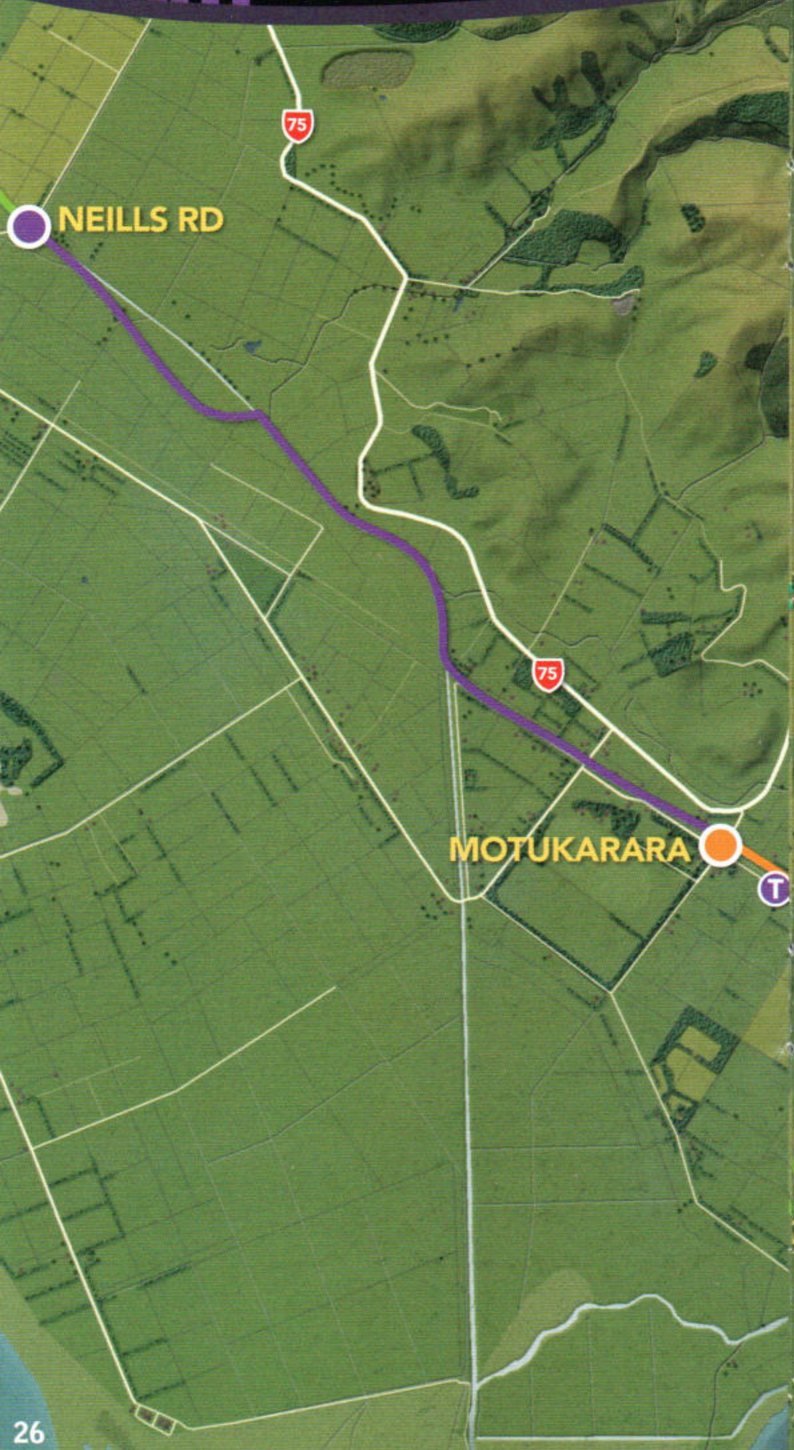
- Tai Tapu Hotel and Restaurant *(Old Tai Tapu Rd)*
- The Store at Tai Tapu *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- The Raspberry Café *(Rhodes Rd)*
- The Bicycle Thief *(Old Tai Tapu Rd)*

FACILITIES

Some parking at intersection of Lincoln Tai Tapu Road and Christchurch Akaroa Road *(Highway 75)*.



6km Neills Road to Motukarara



- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 6KM SHINGLE TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** EASY / LOW
- **SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** OFF-ROAD TRAIL WITH SIDE-ROAD CROSSINGS
- **GRADE:** 1

This section of the trail is mostly off-road and a highly scenic area of riding. The off-trail surfaces are smooth, well maintained and should be suitable for even thin tire widths except for the small bridges and cattle stops which inexperienced riders may want to walk across instead of riding.

Within a few metres of the start of the bike-and-pedestrian-only dirt road, there is a picnic table which is a good place to stop and take a break.

The route is adjacent to the Halswell River but deviates away onto farmland for approximately 1.7km along the Ahuriri Reserve to reduce the impact of disturbance on bird life. The bird life is a key attraction of this unique wetland area as well as views of Mount Herbert in the distance.

Continue on the path until it crosses a bridge and ends at a fork in the road. At the fork, follow the Rail Trail signs and stay left onto Park Road.

The route continues on Park Road as it is jogs right across Duck Pond Road and continues straight across Fiddlers Road. Just 200 meters after crossing Fiddlers Road, look for the old railway station to your left where the trail goes off-road again.

HIGHLIGHTS

There is significant natural, cultural and historical interest along this section of the Rail Trail including:

- The restored Motukarara railway station and wagon
- Ahuriri Reserve

ACCOMMODATION

- Orpingham House B&B *(3 Marion Place, Lincoln).*
- Lincoln Motel *(6 Maurice Street, Lincoln)*
- Waihora Park Domain Camp Ground

FOOD AND DINING

- Blue Duck Cafe

FACILITIES

- Some parking at end of Neills Road where off road section begins
- There are car parks at Motukarara *(off Fiddlers Road)*
- Toilets are available at Motukarara *(off Fiddlers Road at the old railway station)*

BE ADVISED:

Because this section is off road, cyclists are advised to use tyres with good tread.

NEILLS ROAD TO MOTUKARARA

www.littlerivertrail.kiwi.nz

7.9km Motukarara to Kaituna Quarry

- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 7.9KM SHINGLE TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** LOW
- **SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** OFF-ROAD TRAIL WITH SIDE-ROAD CROSSINGS
- **GRADE:** 1

For those looking for a shorter family friendly ride, the car park at Motukarara provides plenty to keep the children occupied while parents prepare bikes for the ride. Whether starting, ending or continuing your ride make sure you check out the wagons, sheds and railway information before leaving the station. Just beside the Motukarara car park, you might pop in at Pony Parties (127 Park Road, Motukarara) if you are looking for another point of interest for younger children.

The trail starts out on an off-road path built on top of the old railway embankment with farmland on both sides. The course gravel makes this section of trail most suitable for mountain bikes. During spring, you may be fortunate enough to have lambs frolicking in the adjacent paddocks before the trail meets up with Te Waihora/Lake Ellesmere. If travelling towards Little River, reaching the lake you will sometimes encounter lake flies (Chironomus zealandicus) that are particularly abundant in the spring. While riding around the edge of the lake, take advantage of areas to pause and observe the spectacular local bird life.

The off-road car park at Kaituna Quarry provides a pick-up point for those not continuing further and a chance to explore the buildings and other remnants of the quarry's origins. Interpretation panels provide information on Lake Ellesmere and its significance to the local iwi (tribe). If continuing your ride further, take time to have a stretch, drink and utilise the toilet facility.

Kaituna Quarry is a large rocky outcrop and can be spotted from some distance away so you can measure your progress towards it.

HIGHLIGHTS

The restored Motukarara railway station and wagon.

Te Waihora (Lake Ellesmere) where the railway embankment is raised above the lake and adjoining wetlands, affording magnificent views of the surroundings and the prolific birdlife.

Ataahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry), the Kaituna Lagoon and the Kaitorete Spit the largest landform of its type in New Zealand.

The rail trail corridor has been fenced off to exclude cattle to aid the regeneration of native wetland vegetation and wildlife habitat. Only sheep will be grazing the Rail Trail so that native species have a chance to regenerate. Sheep grazing helps to manage introduced grasses.

ACCOMMODATION

- Waihora Park Domain Camp Ground

FOOD AND DINING

- Blue Duck Café

MOTUKARARA TO KAITUNA QUARRY

FACILITIES

There are car parks at Motukarara (off Fiddlers Road) and Ātaahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry, accessed directly from State Highway 75).

Toilets are available at Motukarara (by the Railway Station) and Ātaahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry, on the pathway to the car park).

BE ADVISED:

Wind can be a factor along this section of the Rail Trail because it is quite exposed. Midges or lake flies (Chironomus zealandicus) are present during the spring/early summer. On still warm days, vast clouds of midges can be seen over the lake. These flies do not bite but their sheer numbers can be a nuisance. Cyclists particularly, are advised to wear eye protection (glasses or goggles).

This section is off road so cyclists are advised to use tyres with good tread for this section.

5.4km Kaituna Quarry to Birdlings Flat

- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 5.4KM SHINGLE TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** LOW
- **SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** OFF-ROAD TRAIL WITH SIDE-ROAD CROSSINGS
- **GRADE:** 1

This section of the trail begins at the Kaituna Quarry, which is also known as the Ātaahua Reserve.

The trail offers fantastic bird watching — Te Waihora/ Lake Ellesmere's is considered to have the most diverse bird population in New Zealand and through the seasons plays home to over 150 different species of birds. Be on the lookout because if you are lucky you might spot Caspian terns, taranuis or white egrets.

After the trail moves away from the lake's edge, riders can take a detour to Birdlings Flat, where they will be offered a breath-taking view of the ocean and the chance to stroll along the beach of the Kaitōrete Spit, which is rich in gemstones, particularly agates.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Te Waihora / Lake Ellesmere's bird population
- Detour to Birdlings Flat and the Kaitorete Spit
- Ātaahua Reserve

ACCOMMODATION

No accommodations available along this section

FOOD AND DINING

No food and dinning options available along this section

FACILITIES

- There are car parks at Ātaahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry, accessed directly from State Highway 75) and parking space at Birdlings Flat.
- A toilet is available at Ātaahua Reserve (Kaituna Quarry) on the pathway to the car park.
- Parking in Birdlings Flat.

KAITUNA QUARRY TO BIRDLINGS FLAT

KAITUNA TO BIRDLINGS FLAT

www.littlerivertrail.kiwi.nz

9.7km Birdlings Flat to Little River

- **TRAIL SURFACE:** 0.6KM SEALED ROAD, 9.1KM ON SHINGLE TRACK
- **FITNESS LEVEL:** LOW
- **SKILL:** EASY
- **TRAFFIC:** OFF-ROAD TRAIL
- **GRADE:** 1

This section offers an easy ride alongside another ake called Te Roto o Wairewa / Lake Forsyth. Much of the trail is perched on top of the original railway formation, an embankment lined with stone that is a rarity in New Zealand railway design. The trail follows the curving shore line and offers a fantastic view of the steep cliffs that create the shore on the opposite side—a reminder of Banks Peninsula's volcanic past. Before the trail departs from the lake, you will pass Catons Bay which provides picnic tables and a toilet.

Soon you will reach the outskirts of Little River itself. You will arrive at the Little River Railway Station, a preserved piece of New Zealand Rail History with a display of rolling stock and buildings.

Park your bike and take advantage of the facilities, then relax under the trees or the veranda at the station – you have arrived!

HIGHLIGHTS

- Tree covered rail trail along Wairewa Runanga/Lake Forsyth
- The old railway station display in Little River
- Banks Peninsula, the views up the valley and across the lake
- The Art Gallery
- The Station Co Op
- Playground
- Domain

ACCOMMODATION (in or near Little River)

- Little River Hotel *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- Silo Stay *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- KOA Cottage *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- Little River Campground *(Okuti Valley Rd)*
- Marukera Homestay *(Breitmeyers Rd)*
- Okuti Garden Eco-Stay *(Okuti Valley Rd)*
- The Twisted Ngaio *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- Oakston Cabin
- Kowhai Glen B&B *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*
- Bernadette's Retreat *(Christchurch Akaroa Rd)*

BIRDLINGS FLAT TO LITTLE RIVER

FOOD & DINING AT LITTLE RIVER

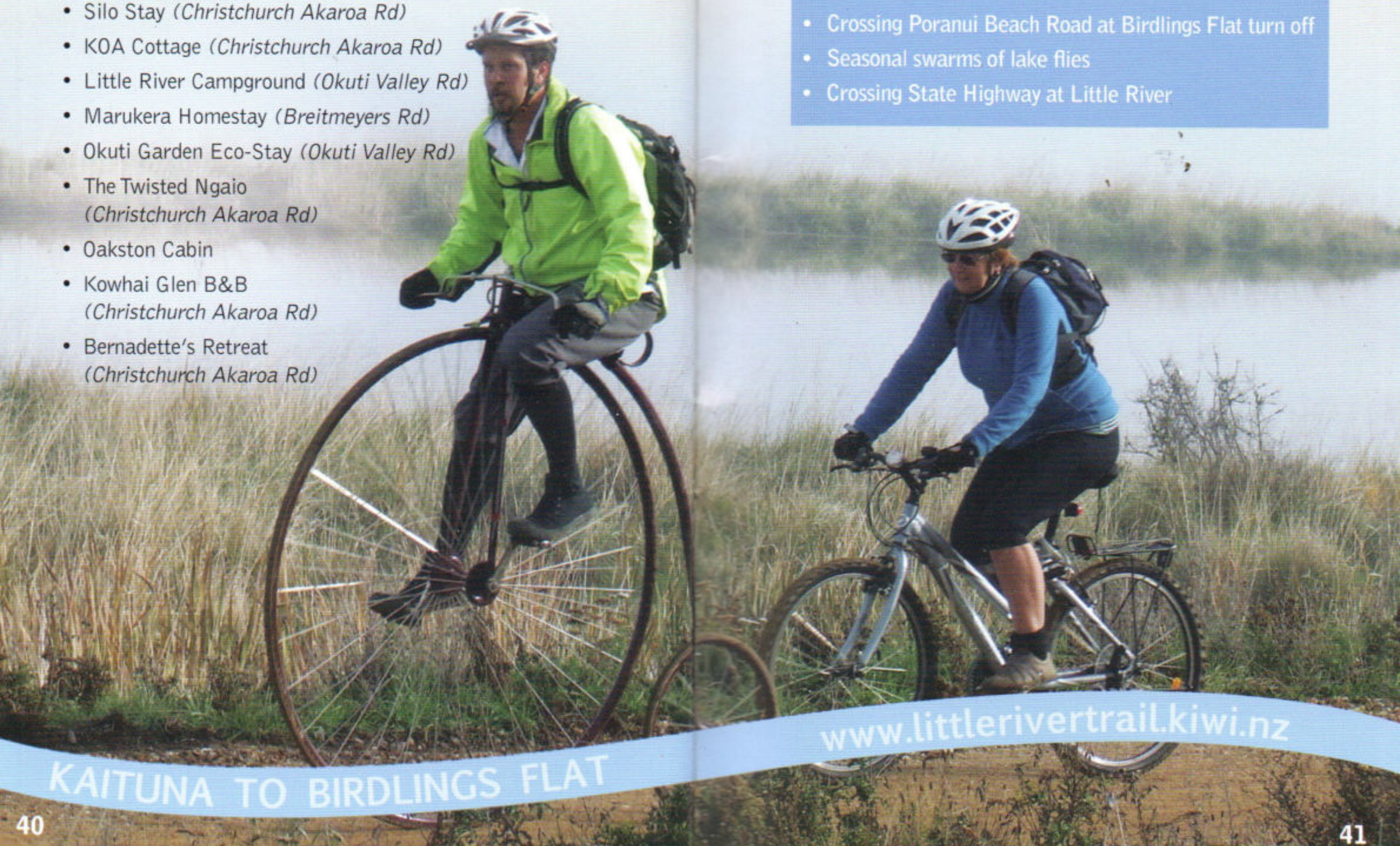
- Little River Hotel
- Little River Café
- Little River Diner

FACILITIES AT LITTLE RIVER

- Toilets–Little River Railway Station
- Drinking water–Little River Hotel
- Little River Store
- There is car parking at Birdlings Flat, Catons Bay, and in the Little River Township

NOTE:

- Crossing Poranui Beach Road at Birdlings Flat turn off
- Seasonal swarms of lake flies
- Crossing State Highway at Little River



KAITUNA TO BIRDLINGS FLAT

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PLANTS, BIRDS AND OTHER LIVING THINGS

LANDSCAPE

The Rail Trail takes you through a changing landscape past the volcanic hills of Banks Peninsula, numerous lakes and wetlands.

Long ago, dense forest covered these hills and the calls of native birds and moa could be heard while a multitude of insects and lizards including tuatara, foraged beneath the canopy. Harrier hawks and falcons soared about the tops, along with giant eagles purported to be large enough to prey upon moa. Vast populations of fish, penguins, fur seals, pelicans and dolphins thrived in the waters lapping the peninsula which also provided seasonal passage to migrating whales.

TE WAIHORA (Lake Ellesmere)

Te Waihora is New Zealand's fifth largest lake (20,000ha) and a major wildlife area. The mildly saline waters support very large populations of birds and fish.

FISH

Te Waihora supports a large diversity of fish (43 species have been recorded, 15 of which are indigenous). Keep your eyes open for basking sharks, sting rays and even sea horses as all have been spotted in the lake waters.

NATURE AT ITS BEST!

BIRDLIFE

It is the sheer volume of birds that many visitors find most striking. A huge variety of migrant and breeding species can be seen here and at any one time as many as 98,000 birds might be found. Te Waihora has the most diverse bird population of any location in New Zealand.

LAKE FLIES OR MIDGES
(Chironomus zealandicus)

Of most interest to Rail Trail users who visit Te Waihora during the spring and early summer (November and December) are the lake flies which are out in their millions. On still, warm days vast clouds of flies can be seen over the lake, they do not bite but their sheer numbers can be a nuisance. Cyclists particularly, are advised to take eye protection (glasses or goggles). For more information see 'Mighty midge' by Dr Alison Evans (Insect Ecologist).

FLORA – The Plant Species

Alongside the Rail Trail and predominantly associated with the wetland areas there are many native plants.

Patches of brilliant orange or yellow on rocks along the trail are lichens, some of the hundreds of species which grow on the Peninsula. They are by far the most ancient life forms you will see along the trail, having survived for millions of years.

Rare plants found along the trail include a native orchid (Spiranthes sinensis) and the giant umbrella sedge *(Cyperus stulatus)*.

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Happy with the Trail?
Any suggestions for how it can be improved?

We want to hear from you!

Please take a moment to provide your feedback on the Trail by filling out our survey using either the URL or QR code.

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